HARAMBEE FLAME

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MARABLE TO SPEAK AT BANQUET

Manning Marable, a co-founder of the National Black Independent Political Party and Associate Professor of Political Economy at the Africana Studies & Research Center, Cornell University, has agreed to be the guest speaker for this year's Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization banquet. While this commitment was secured from Brother Marable some weeks ago, we needed to raise money to pay his air fare.

We submitted an application for an executive grant of $500.00 to the Nebraska Committee For The Humanities. Notification has just been received that the application was approved.

The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization is very pleased that we will be having Brother Marable address our banquet, which will be held on the 6th of June, because he will provide us and our guests with important and necessary insights founded upon both his organizational experience and intensive educational background. We are hopeful that Brother Marable's address will serve to motivate both our members and guests to seek to become more aware of our collective situation as American-born Afrikans and to become more willing to seek to rectify it.

We express our appreciation both to Brother Marable for accepting our invitation and to the Nebraska Committee For The Humanities for making his trip here from New York possible.

LET JESUS DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Too many of us are locked away in jails and prisons, too many of us are exploiting our own, too many of us are addicted to drugs and/or alcohol, and too many of us are simply blind to things that are going on around us. Certainly white folks are suffering from these same maladies. However, we are not white folks and the fact that they too have these same problems does not legitimize our failure to seriously deal with ours.

So what are we to do? No doubt we will have to struggle against "the system." But there is a more immediate task before us, that of struggling to become A FORCE, a group united under a single goal or set of goals. We are not such a force at present because we have left up to others the job of molding our thoughts and attitudes. We have let the schools do it, television, newspapers, politicians, etc.

We, just as any other people, are not unlike plants in that we are as strong or weak or as beautiful or ugly as the soil(plant food) have enabled us to be. The bible speaks clearly of the chances for growth and health had by those seeds which have been planted in rocky soil. And it is surely rocky soil which produces political hacks who compromise away a people's interests for the sake of personal "interest," men and women who sell dangerous drugs to their own people, men and women who will kill their own over trifles. And it is ideas and images that enter our minds which constitute this rocky ground.

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The idea that personal profit is more important than the rights, needs, and lives of the group of which one is a part is not one that enters our minds through some kind of magical process. There is nothing mystical about how an American-born Afrikan comes to the penitentiary boasting of how mean a gangster he is. Is there no correlation between the fact that many American-born Afrikans believe their native Afrikan Brothers and Sisters to be ignorant savages and the fact that we generally see Afrikan natives portrayed this way on television and in movies?

We do not control the commercial media or the schools, some of the most powerful vehicles by which ideas and images are brought to us. So how do we change the soil we're in? How do we change the ideas and images upon which we base our attitudes and behavior? We establish our own sources (community newsletters; small wattage, community-controlled radio stations; etc.) in an effort to combat the negative effects of dominant culture sources of ideas and images.

But what do we control? To the extent that ministers in our communities depend upon congregational support for their livelihood(though not in all cases) and for the maintainence of church buildings, we control our churches.

In Latin America a significant number of priests and nuns have thrown off the spiritual chains of traditional complicity(emanating from the Vatican) with government oppression of the poor and are following what they call "liberation theology." This theology, put in simple terms, is one which recognizes that Jesus was not only one who "turned the other cheek" but one who went into the temple with a whip to deal with those whom had turned "the house of God into a den of thieves." Liberation theology recognizes that Jesus was a man who spoke out against oppression.

Because the so-called "Black Church" is an institution that we control, we must make practical use of it, use that is in the interests of our communities, not in the interests of status quo-maintenance. Our preachers must begin to take advantage of the sermon and give to their congregations ideas and images by which we can strive for liberation in this life instead of waiting around for salvation in a questionable next one.

If the "Black Church" is to continue to exist, it should do so as a motivator of change. Our preachers must take on the responsibility and we must demand this of them. The streets of America are not paved of gold but of concrete. This is real and our church must address real needs.

One of such real needs is that of removing the disease of racial self-hatred from our spirits. But how is this possible when our own preachers tell us that a white Jesus is the son of God and that human beings are made in the likeness of God? If the son of God is a caucasian, then surely his father is a caucasian as well. Who, then, are we who are not of white skin?

Would a just and loving God have told humankind that we are made in his/her image and then sent to earth a white son? Such is doubtlessly nonsense. But it is precisely such nonsense that too many of us believe and which too many of our preachers perpetuate.

Before the "Black Church" can become a vehicle of liberation, it must cease to perpetuate this lie, rid itself of images of a white Jesus, and begin to value the knowledge and understanding of history so that we can know the truth. One important component of this truth is that "Africa, it is now generally accepted, was the original birthplace of the human race."(AFRICA'S SEARCH FOR IDENTITY, Victor C. Ferkiss, The World Publishing Co.)

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FROM OTHER SOURCES

Revisiting Atlanta--"Two Black youths have been reported as missing by the media here. The two are Michael Phillips, twenty-one, and Chester Gaston, twenty-two. Phillips has been missing since March 2, Gaston since March 12.

"Both are reported to be 'mentally disturbed.' Gaston is of slight build. These are characteristics of some of the twenty-eight Black youths murdered here over the last three years."

-THE MILITANT(April 9, '82)

American-Born Afrikan Women & Employment--"54% of all Black women are working or looking for work; in 1981 the 15.5% unemployment rate for Black women was double the rate for all workers, but it also represented an employment gain of 43,000 from a year earlier; 42% of the 6.3 million Black families are maintained by women alone;Black women are more than twice as likely as white women to be jobless, in low-paying jobs, to maintain a family alone(they also account for a larger proportion of the poor); Black women earn 56 cents for every dollar earned by men, both white and black, and less than 60 cents that all women earn."

-figures cited by Dr. Lenora Cole-Alexander of the Labor Dept.'s Women's Bureau; MILWAUKEE COURIER(April 3, '82)

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LET JESUS DOWN FROM THE CROSS

Not only does the evidence indicate that Afrikans were the first people, but there is considerable evidence which indicates that Jesus was not a caucasian(Read BLACK MESSIAH by Rev. Albert Cleage and BLACK MAN'S RELIGION by Dr. Yosef ben-Jochannan.). Additionally there is no place in the Bible where Jesus claims divinity. What is the meaning of this? It is that we have no reason to suffer the pains of racial self-hatred other than the fact than we have been taught myths and lies by those in whose interest it is to have us hate ourselves and each other.

How do we remember Malcolm-those of us who have the courage to remember? We remember him as one who lived. But we are taught to remember Jesus as a dead man-except during Easter-who hung on a cross. What possible inspiration can we get from such an image? It is time for the "Black Church" to snatch Jesus down from the cross, to strip from him the wrappings of biblical allegory and mysticism, and to give us that kind of instruction which will aid us in knowing and respecting our collective selves and give us proper guidance in dealing with "the money-changers."

The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organiza- is aware that there are some American-born Afrikan preachers who truly wish to serve their people. We welcome the opportunity to work with you.

-the editor

SECRET SORROW

A smile that brightens up the face
Is almost always worn
It hides a heart that's torn
But all the while it stays in place
And never would a frown disgrace
The secret burden borne

A laugh that bubbles out so clear
It hides an inner sob
Deception is its job
But if one listens one might hear
The sorrow that' disguised as cheer
To fool a friendly mob

The carefree attitude portrayed
Is almost always fake
It's for the public's sake
In private, bright expressions fade
Unneeded is this masquerade
The tears may overtake

A happy voice that hails hello
It hides an inner gloom
It's real, one may assume
The inside suffering does not show
When kept, so others may not know
Confined to one's own room.

-Doreen Charles

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in love
i do more
but
in doubt
i only transfer
pain to paper
gigantic passion plays
miracles and martyrs
crucifixions, resurrections
come to stay
or stay away
this series of passion poems
is becoming a
heavy cross to bear.

-an untitled poem by Robin, contributed to the FLAME by Dave Landers

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Your contributions of poetry are welcomed.

-the editor/David L. Rice